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# Understanding the Business of Spying

By Roy Godson

WASHINGTON — Democracies often manifest somnambulist tendencies. One unintended advantage of the Walker spy case may be to show us, before it is too late, just how vulnerable we are to the increasingly sophisticated espionage of the Soviet Union.

Moscow's intelligence and espionage has improved dramatically since the 1960's. Seizing the time — taking advantage of détente — Soviet bloc countries more than doubled the number of their spies in the West. In the United States alone, the number rose from several dozen in the 1960's to many hundreds today. By now, every third or fourth employee entering a Soviet bloc embassy or press office in the West is also a full-time official of the K.G.B. or a related service — a total of 800 to 900 officers out of some 2,600 officials. In addition to these "legals" — intelligence operatives who have entered the United States legally, albeit ostensibly for another purpose — the bloc also deploys an unknown number of "illegals" operating under deep cover.

But the Russians have also improved the quality of their espionage — and have been much aided in this by the unilateral cutback of American counterintelligence that began in the late 1960's. The exact figures remain classified, but virtually all former senior officials of the Central Intelligence Agency and the Federal Bureau of Investigation confirm the fact: Just as the Russians were increasing their capabilities, our counterintelligence personnel and budgets were cut and their activities were much curtailed by legal restrictions.

At the same time, important changes in American society have contributed to our increased vulnerability. The counterculture of the 1960's was, quite simply, incompatible with counterintelligence. True, very few Americans now spy out of

love for the Soviet Union. But increasing numbers have been driven to it by their alienation from their own country. The erosion of integrity at the top adds greatly to this sense of contempt for the United States. If senior leaders provide classified information to journalists or political allies in order to further their own ambitions, why shouldn't these down the chain of command do the same for money or excitement?

What can be done to reverse these trends? Tightening Government security will not help as much as many expect. A tightening of the classification system would be useful, as would a cutback in the number of people who have access to real secrets. But these measures would not stop people like the Walkers: Thousands, even millions, of Americans will still have a valid need for properly classified information.

We can, however, begin to address the problem by making it much more difficult for our adversaries to take advantage of our open society. We should pass the bills now before Congress that would limit the number of "legals" that Washington and Moscow keep in the other country. At the same time, the powers of the newly established Office of Foreign Missions in the State Department should be expanded to regulate the behavior of all Soviet-bloc "legals" here.

We must, for years to come, continue to increase the resources we devote to counterintelligence and security. Since we began to do this, in 1979, we have barely reversed the decline of the 1970's. We must persevere — and, doing so, must remember that counterintelligence and increased security in fact protect our civil liberties and are not necessarily attacks on individual freedom.

Addressing the problems of our cultural attitudes will be more difficult. Polling and other data indicate that Americans are less alienated today than in the 1960's and 1970's. But if our

elite continues to leak and reward leakers, and journalists continue to publish whatever secrets they see fit, surely others will do the same. Changes in attitudes start at the top, and we must begin by eliminating the double standards there.

A balance must be struck between our security and the search for better relations with the Soviet bloc. We needn't give up that search — or in any way threaten our open society and free press. But we must begin, carefully, to rouse ourselves out of our vulnerability before we are all too rudely awakened. □

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